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LAKELAND POEMS
AND OTHERS

LAKELAND POEMS

AND OTHERS

BY

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WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

CARLISLE
CHARLES THURNAM & SONS
1905

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APOLOGIA

To presume to put forth this little book, being his first adventure into print, the writer has found, requires considerable courage. He ventures, however, to send it forth, after long wavering, but with the consciousness that it has the disadvantage, and the defects, of his inexperience. Yet, not without a hope, that his readers may find pleasure in its pages, as he has found in writing them.

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LAKELAND POEMS

THE CRIER OF THE CLAIFE.

A LEGEND OF WINDERMERE FERRY.

“Formerly it was impossible to get over by the Ferry after dusk, and if you should arrive at the Nab too late, you may call all night long, but the boat will not come.”—HARRIET MARTINEAU.

'T WAS Hallowmas Eve—
A night of fear,
For crossing the Ferry of Windermere :
The storm-fiend stalked upon the Lake :
The wind went mad.

The Ferry Inn is bright within,
With festive revelry and din.

The host good cheer is pouring forth :
 Great logs are crackling on the hearth :
 Turmoil and strife may rage without,
 But what care they for the storm's mad rout !

As tho' the wind held, too, high revel-rouse,
 Shock after shock, he hurled against the house.
 Tearing across the wave,
 They heard the maniac rave ;
 Onward he leapt,
 In furious glee,
 And past the house he swept,
 To whistle in the tree.
 Few quiet lulls did he afford—
 More quiet by contrast—
 With force redoubled then he roared
 A furious shuddering blast—
 Like a frenzied beast of prey—
 Ere he sped his trackless way.

Another song be sung ! Another cup be full !
 But suddenly—within a lull—

A wild holloa !
 From the opposite shore—
 They hold their breath,
 To listen what it saith—
 Again, again, that wild voice came :—
 “ A boat ! A boat !—In heaven’s name ! ”

All eyes are fixed on the Ferryman, he
 Was young and strong as strong could be.
 He cannot go, he must not go ;
 ’Twere madness over the Ferry to row :
 No boat could live for an instant, in
 The storm-tossed waters’ wildering din.

The Ferryman rose, and strode outside—
 “ Stop ! stop ! ’tis madness ! ” all of them
 cried.

Proudly he smiled, as he replied :
 “ Ye hear !—again ! that wild holloa ;
 A boat it craves—*my* boat shall go ! ”

He leapt into his dancing boat :
They loose the chain, they fling it in,
And in the waters' wildering din,
Alone he is afloat.

Black is the night :
The boat and he are lost to sight.

To the Inn again they all repair ;
They cannot stand, for the wind, out there.
But all night long no more they drank—
From the festive mirth they all of them shrank ;
Their fears have made them sober and wise,
And each is ready with his own surmise,
As to who holloed those awful cries—
They hear them still—and the echoed replies.

An hour has gone, and more :
Again they stand upon the shore.

They cannot rest,
By their fears oppressed.
They peer through the dark and the foam,
And the lanterns gave
Their flashing signals over the wave,
To guide the Ferryman home.

Three hours have gone—he comes not yet—
A group has gathered upon the shore ;
And some have said : “ He’ll come no more,
Nor the passenger, whom he has met.”

Hark ! a sound !—The familiar clash,
When, ’gainst a coming boat, the waters dash ;
And on the instant, Ferryman and boat
Have leapt out of the darkness, and—
With a mighty sweep of the oar—
The boat is driven upon the shore,
The Ferryman hath sprung to land ;
He is alone !

Full many a lantern on him shone :
His face is pale ; his eyes are wild :
Not a word doth he say,
Nor a moment stay—
He who at every danger smiled—
But rushes home along the shore,
While the air is rent
By a volley of questions after him sent :
But he has entered and hath slammed the door.

The long night through,
Tho' his lips have moved,
He cannot speak
To those he loved :
He covers his wild eyes
To hide some hateful sight.
Ere the first streak
Of morning light
The mountains clad,
He has gone raving mad,
And, raving mad, he dies.

But what he saw
 On that night of fear,
 Over the Ferry of Windermere,
 None evermore shall know—
 'Tis the secret of the rolling wave :
 'Tis buried in the Ferryman's grave.

But every night, as darkness fell,
 And all the long nights through—
 A thousand tongues were ready to tell,
 And swear that the tale was true—
 Came the awful cries of that wild holloa,
 Over the Ferry from the opposite shore :—
 "A boat! A boat!" that wild voice came :
 "A boat! A boat!—In heaven's name!"

The affrighted people, far and near,
 Were filled with amazement, dread and fear ;
 Till they all agreed, with one consent,
 And to the Island Priest they went—

To the Island Priest, in his lonely cell,
 Whom the monks of Furness stationed there,
 To quell the storms with his fast and prayer—
 And to him their awful tales they tell;
 Beseeching him, by the Saints held dear,
 And the Holy Mother, whom they revere—
 To rid them from that voice of fear,
 That haunted the Ferry of Windermere.

'Twas Christmas Eve—
 The midnight Mass of Rome
 Proceeds within the Chapel of
 Our Lady and the Holm.¹
 The Priest is dimly seen,
 By the glimmering tapers, nigh—
 The wreathing incense-clouds between—
 As he lifts the Host on high.
 The bell, that instant tolled,
 Upon the stilly midnight air,
 Over the lake and mountains rolled

¹ The island is still called Lady-Holm.

The tidings everywhere :
 And all who heard it knelt to pray,
 The Priest, that holy night, might lay,
 For evermore, the voice of fear,
 That haunted the Ferry of Windermere.

To the Ferry-Nab proceeding—(hark !
 Each pulsing row-lock's measured throb,
 Each answering echo—like a sob)
 The Priest is rowing through the dark.
 The holy Mass hath made him strong ;
 And he still mutters prayers as he goes
 along ;
 Or stops to sign the holy Cross,
 'Gainst all the powers of darkness gross.
 Until, at length, the destined beach
 His boat doth almost reach :
 The oars are shipped—with slackening pace,
 In silence dread, the drifting boat,
 By the lessening impulse, slower and slower, is
 brought—

Till it grating grounds upon the sand—
 But ere the Priest could spring to land—
 Instant, upon the silence fell,
 That awful voice—a piercing yell ;
 And *something* rushed toward the boat,
 And *something* hold of the gunwale caught ;
 And—“ A boat ! A boat ! ”—that wild voice
 came :
 “ A boat ! *At last !* ”—It was the same !

But what the Priest did, or what he saw,
 None evermore shall know.
 Tho' some do say, o'er the Ferry he rowed,
 And *something* behind, in the water, towed !
 But he bound the fiend for ever safe,
 Within the cavern of the Claife.

There are, who tell the hapless lot,
 Of some who've dared approach the spot—
 Of some by night, and some by day—
 Who ne'er were known to come away !

For, tho' within its cell confined,
That voice howls still upon the wind.

The children, lying in their beds,
Affrighted, cover up their heads :
And good-wives, all, their doors make safe,
When they hear the Crier of the Claife.

VESPERS.

N ow close the April flowers,
The sun is sinking low,
The breeze is wooing showers,
To veil the western glow.

Untouched by their misty wreathing,
How blue is the sky above !
How sweet is the Spring's young breathing,
And the ring-dove's coo of love !

There are sounds on the stillness falling—
The click of a closing gate ;
A blackbird shrilly calling
Good-night to his brooding mate.

A distant sheep-dog's barking,
 Comes through the tranquil eve,—
 Through the glimmering gray of the darkening,
 Where the mystic shadows weave.

A phantom-sound of hooting,
 From yonder old gray tower :—
Ulloo—ulloo,—saluting
 The welcome twilight hour.

The twilight deepens into night ;
 Naught greets the wistful eye—
 Save, one by one, each vesper-light
 Rekindled in the sky.

THE DECLARATION OF PEACE.

SUNDAY, JUNE THE 1ST 1902.

E NGLAND'S sword once more we see,
Cleaves her way to victory :

Trusty friend or stubborn foe,
All alike shall own its sway—
Tried in many an evil day—
True to us, as long ago.

Mother great of nations free,
Daughters rise to honour thee !
They thy features reproduce—
Patient, dogged, calm as thou,
Determination on their brow—
Following well the ancient use.

No more death-lists to peruse,
 Every morning, in the news—
 Burden lifted from thy heart.
 Bore thou well the time of strife :
 When false calumny was rife,
 Thou didst play the hero's part.

'Tis a glorious first of June !
 List !—the pealing church-bells' tune
 Wafted on the evening air !
 Peace and rest to all they bring—
 Gladsome message—while they ring
 To its close, this Sabbath fair.

Summer, clad in her new dress :
 Flowers that breathe their sweet caress :
 Singing birds from every bush :
 Peace to us proclaim this night ;
 Voices of the day unite
 Softly in the evening hush.

Dim and lowering day has been,
For this month, of all, the queen :

But, relenting, comes the eve ;
Clouds are lifting in the west,
Yielding to the sun's behest,
That he smilingly may leave.

Nobly fought our patriot-sons :
Dauntless faced the raging guns :

Britons they—how could they fear ?
Fought they oft till closed the night,
And with morn renewed the fight—
Now for them the ringing cheer !

Ah, what price hath victory claimed !
Now, with bated breath, be named
Sacrifice of glorious dead.

Ah, those noble soldier-boys,
Death denies to share our joys—
Nobly, nobly, have they bled.

Sleeping on the far-off plain—
 Ne'er be welcomed home again ;
 Touch no more old England's shore—
 Now, my grateful country, rouse !
 Crown, with fadeless wreaths, dead brows !
 May their deeds live evermore !

Ah, the desolated homes—
 Mothers', widows', fathers' groans :
 Ah, the nation's direful loss :
 Oft, beside their lowly mounds,
 We shall kneel, and feel their wounds,
 By some rude memorial Cross.

Pro patria mori—this,
 Of all deaths, the noblest is—
 They have died in battle-day :
 Ye have given of your best ;
 To your country leave the rest,
 She, your debtor, must repay.

Ye, who gave your sons to die,
Bid your whelming tears be dry !
 England rises—thanks you all,
For those warrior-sons ye gave,
That her honour they might save,
 Springing forth at duty's call.

England ! noble heart thou hast—
Worthy of thy noble past !
 Treat thy conquered foemen well :
Knit all hearts, estranged by war,
In that land distressed afar—
 That Boer and Briton, one may dwell.

Mingled on the battle-ground,
Blood of friend and foe around :
 May all hatred ever cease !
Lifting clouds of battle show,
Blessed vision—rising slow—
 Of a never-ending peace !

To the God of battles raise,
Now our thankful hymn of praise;
 Who us giveth victory !
England, may thou pure aspire;
From the purging of this fire,
 Work out thy great destiny !

CROSS-FELL.

WHERE trails the long-drawn Pennine Ridge,
Against the eastern sky :
Where gaunt Cross-Fell begins to lift
His massive form on high,
And looks across the west, to where
Those kindred giants stand—
All in their regal purple clothed—
The monarchs of Lake-land :

How sweet to see the dawn of day,
Beyond those rugged rifts !
To mark when, first, a ray of light
Its herald-finger lifts,
And flings afar its warning sign,
Where darkness still holds sway—
Bids gloomy shades of night depart,
Before all-conquering day !

Forth, then, the herald leads along
 The pomp and pageant bright ;
 And waiting clouds the glory hail,
 Transformed with radiant light.
 Against the glittering, sheeny sky,
 The outlined mountain seems—
 Upon its rugged crest and slope—
 Crowned with a halo's beams.

How sweet to see the first glad ray
 Across the churchyard fall !
 Across the slanting grave-stones gray,
 And flood with light them all :
 Thanks unto thee, calm light of morn,
 For tokens daily given,
 Of the fadeless dawn that shall lead on
 The perfect day of Heaven !

Betimes, upon yon mountain-top,
 A cloudy helmet forms,
 "Behold," say they, "the Helm is on"—
 The sign of raging storms :

For where they see, advance—retreat,
 The shuddering helmet-bar,
 Two winds, on differing oceans bred,
 Wage elemental war.

From Cross-Fell's rugged heights, around,
 The shepherd can descry
 Five northern Shires, outspreading vast,
 Girt by the circling sky.
 He sees man's dwindled works, like toys,
 From off his breezy hills,
 And the heaven's majestic loneliness,
 With awe, his bosom fills.

Naught breaks that mountain solitude—
 Save one familiar sound—
 The panting of his faithful dog,
 Outstretched upon the ground.
 Deep secrets, there, of men and things,
 Can the solitary find,
 Unknown in crowded haunts of men,
 Who live by greed, or grind.

For solitude hath voices,
Unheard in the great world's din ;
Voices of mystic restfulness—
The eloquence within :
When kindled hearts, responsive, prompt
Lone voices there to raise—
Or on like mountain solitudes—
A thankful burst of praise.

THE PLAYTHINGS OF OCEAN.

WHO that hath learnt, in the music of the sea,
 To drown his cares,
 Of the beauty of the wave-worn stones can be
 All unawares ?

When the long line of white surf advancing the dry
 stones hath kissed,
 And dappled with foam :
 Where the frowning headland, seen through the
 scudding mist,
 Looms a dimly-distant dome :

In the rattle of the shingle, like the crash
 When thunder raves :
 'Tis then these stones be fashioned, in the wash,
 And wake of waves.

A crackle and a thud : a tongue of foam
 Flung up the beach,
 Leaving a mark for others to o'erlap, each one
 Doth higher reach :

When seething, jostling, churning, tossing, toiling
 For ever on :
 When all the long lines of breakers, in fury boiling,
 Are blent in one :

When all the far-off million white crests curling,
 Recurring cast—
 Each one its gathered forces headlong hurling
 In the foam of the last :

Who hath not paused to mark, strewn at his side,
 These marvellous stones,
 Treated by the sculptor at each returning tide,
 And their beauteous tones ?

Oh, what surpassing colours, pure and clean,—
 Red, brown and blue,—
Like marble white—and black, purple and green,
 And every hue.

How delicately smooth are they, and round !
 What glory gleams !
What marks and veinings chased herein are found,
 Beyond all dreams !

Flints, granites, dappled, piebald—some are dressed
 With slender threads of green,
As tho' a fairy seaweed were impressed,
 And therein seen.

Could art of man by toil of ceaseless duty,
 The like have wrought,
As ocean's myriad pebbles, in their beauty
 Surpassing thought ?

And all the delicate layers interlaced,
 Are there laid bare :
 And the fairy rings, like girdles round them traced,
 Imbedded there.

Till wanderers on the shore, like children, cry
 With ever fresh delight
 At each, until another shall outvie
 To catch the admiring sight.

No sooner do the hues of one entrance
 The enraptured eye,
 Than others, of still richer beauty, glance
 In passing by.

Cease ! for the mind no longer can explore them :
 The eyes refuse to gaze :
 The feet are weary trudging, crunching, o'er them,
 In their bewildering maze.

.

Oh, can it be that these great stones and rude,
 Fresh-wrested from the shore,
 To the hue and size of pebbles be subdued,
 By the ceaseless war ?

Can each one of these tiny grains of sand—
 Which scarce the eye may see—
 Have been a boulder, torn from a vanished land,
 Can thus it be ?

.
 Yon children issuing forth, to play on the dunes,
 From the fisherman's cot,
 Have "made a selection," of all the prettiest ones,
 To fringe his garden-plot ;

And there, in order prim, they're placed alone—
 The same they ne'er can be !
 Torn from their setting, all their beauty's gone—
 Beauty is harmony.

THE GORSE AND THE BROOM.

O H what a golden crown,
 On the roadway falling down !
 The heart beats with pleasure : Oh now for a measure,
 While those two are in bloom,
 The gorse and the broom !

The way can never tire :
 The hedges are on fire !
 Two rows of light stretch away out of sight—
 Companions they, in bloom,
 The gorse and the broom.

The dust can never jade,
 While their glories do not fade :
 The feet are never weary, the way is never dreary,
 When those two are in bloom,
 The gorse and the broom.

The waste places spangle
With all the golden tangle :
Oh, how they seem to please all the fat-legged bees !
Those twins in their bloom,
The gorse and the broom.

What sight-tormenting brightness :
What hideous glaring whiteness
Of the sun-baked road—'twere a weary load—
Unless they were in bloom,
The gorse and the broom.

A waste place by the road ;
A pathway round it trode,
By those who like me turned aside to see
The glory of their bloom—
The gorse and the broom.

I know not who they were,
But already do I share

In their sweet communion, and we have a union,
Because of their bloom,
The gorse and the broom.

The pathway they have lain
Will revert to sward again,
When the rough wind blusters to scatter the golden
clusters,
And leaves ne'er a bloom
Of the gorse or the broom.

There's an old man breaking stones—
Pointing his strokes with groans ;
Hammering his life out to keep his life in—
Amid the glorious bloom
Of the gorse and the broom.

THE MEN OF BORROWDALE.

PEACE to the men of Borrowdale—
 The men of ancient time !
 Whose fame of old has oft been told,
 And shall be now in rhyme.

They loved to hail, in Borrowdale,
 The cuckoo and the Spring :
 But they obtuse, did oft confuse
 The symbol with the thing.

If Borrowdale could but prevail
 ' On that bird to leave them never :
 'Twas just the thing—eternal Spring,
 Would then be theirs for ever !

They built a wall, so great withal,
 As saith the ancient tale—
 It is supposed, they almost closed
 The “Jaws¹ of Borrowdale”!

For long they toiled, but ah! he spoiled
 All their aspiring schemes;
 He spread his wing—the stupid thing—
 And left them to their dreams!

The woods grew still, the winds blew chill
 Through leafless trees their wail:
 And, sad to tell, old Winter fell,
 As erst, on Borrowdale.

Shades of the men of Borrowdale—
 The men of ancient time—
 I blame not you, forgive me, too,
 For this my wayward rhyme.

¹ The narrow entrance to the dale

I blame you not, for true it is—
 And everyone assures—
 The eye of man could never scan
 A lovelier vale than yours.

Whoso' hath entered in, past Grange,
 With its two-eyed¹ blinking bridge;
 Where road and river scarce find room,
 Beneath yon beetling ridge—

Whoso' between hath gone, and seen
 Your vale, will never blame you :
 Whoso' hath seen *your* Spring, I ween,
 With reverence will name you !

¹ At the turning of the road, where the bridge comes suddenly in view, the sunlight on the water, reflecting upward, darts its flashing play of light and shade against the under-masonry of the bridge, the two arches looking exactly like two great twinkling eyes.

Whoso' hath seen the bracken green,
And heard your woodlands ring ;
Seen every glen revive again ;
Hath seen *indeed* a Spring.

The falling Force, with its torrent hoarse,
Dim seen through the greenery—
The hanging trees : the bracken ; these
Are more than " scenery "—

Each babbling brook, in its fairy nook,
Or held in its rocky bowl,
Where the sunlight peeps and the water creeps,
Hath its whisper for the soul.

The shade of the trees ; the zephyr breeze ;
The waters green and cool ;
Where the sunlight plays, in slanting rays,
On the mirror of each pool.

The bridge with its gleam on the lazy stream ;
 The splash of a leaping trout ;
 And the fairy rings its leaping brings,
 That widen and die out.

The cuckoo best, loves *some* bird's nest,
 Which he borrows without ado :
 And, in his quest, the loveliest
 Of *dales* he *Borrows*, too !

Is it by choice, he lifts his voice,
 Haunting so much your vale ?—
 Is the tale due to him, or you ?
 Pray, men of Borrowdale !

This is the spot—tale true or not—
 That most to him is dear,
 For I testify, I've heard his cry,
 Nowhere so much as here.

Thanks to you, men of Borrowdale,
And to your fabled wall !
Could I but hold things loved of old,
I'd build around them all—

Round dear dead faces, that memory traces,
And many a dear dead scene,
From the buried past—loved till the last—
And things that might have been.

THE RIVER IN THE DALE.

(NOT BORROWDALE.)

HOW sweetly sings the river
 The songs that never fail ;
 The songs it hath sung for ages,
 To the dwellers in the Dale !

'Tis a little world enfolded
 In the arms of its barrier-hills—
 The homes of the sheep and the moor-grouse,
 And the merry little rills.

Where folk are known to each other ;
 But more than mere faces they know :
 They know each life's twofold story—
 Its pages of gladness and woe.

In the faces you see are reflected
The feelings that work in the heart—
As unto the face of the river,
The trees their likeness impart—

As by wrinkles and ripples and curlings,
That play on its surface, you know
The strength and direction of forces,
At work on the stones below.

Yes, sweetly sings the river
The songs that never cease—
The songs that cheer in lifetime,
And of eternal peace.

It cheers the work of the daytime ;
Then, in the hush of even,
As they sit to rest and listen,
It sings to them of Heaven.

The children love to ramble,
Along by the tangled way,
That winds in and out beside it,
Or linger there to play—

All through the grass and rushes,
Beneath the alder trees—
Where they gather the yellow iris,
And the wood anemones.

The Dale is so calm and peaceful,
No wonder the stranger saith—
“’Tis a place where a life that is blameless
Leads on to a peaceful death.”

Let us hope that the brown-faced children—
Becoming a grown-up race—
Will stay where they played by the river,
And seek not an untried place.

So gently it sings in the daytime,
Then louder all the night ;
But the mightiest voice uplifting,
When the flood is at its height.

How soothing are its voices !
Here, as I feel their sway,
My very soul is lifted,
And floated far away.

Thanks for thy gentle music !
It hath charmed away my care,
And I feel myself uprising,
As on the wings of a prayer.

Here, in its gliding waters,
What fairy peeps I see—
When the sun comes forth to show me,
The painter he can be !

Moss stones, with long weeds waving,
In the golden sunlight's gleam ;
And the fishes idly floating—
'Tis an enchanted stream.

There, on its dazzling ripples—
Like stars, in myriads, glance
Bright rays of silver shimmering,
With flashing sparkle and dance.

When, 'neath the darkling beeches,
The quiet waters steal,
A twilight, dim and awesome,
In solemn hush they feel.

Onward in silence sweeping,
Majestically slow ;
With countless foam-specks eddying,
As white as flakes of snow.

And, thence, broad meadows laving,
 Its winding courses flow ;
With fringing willows bending
 Upon its waters low.

In the Dale stands many a cottage,
 Hidden on each wooded steep,
Sloping downward to the river,
 Where below its waters creep.

Growing in their garden-bowers—
 Constant as the calendar—
See the dear old English flowers
 Sacred to the cottager !

THE RILL BESIDE THE SEA.

THREE blessed inward peace, amid
 The turmoil of the sea,
 That broods around thee, little rill,
 Oh, glad discovery !
 A towering bank, upon each hand,
 Uplifts itself by stages—
 Great wrinkles on its forehead worn—
 Each one the work of ages.

There dost thou gild the bareness of
 The rocks that on thee frown,
 With a maze of greeny freshness, where
 Thy waters trickle down ;
 Spreading refreshing coolness round—
 How sweet thou art to me
 Soul-weary of the ocean, and
 Its rim of destiny !

The little rill hath made the glen—
 Safe sheltered here from dangers—
 A paradise, with flowers of home,
 To please the eye of strangers :
 Wherein it flows, through its ribbon of green,
 Each bending flower caresses,
 Regales the mosses, sways the reeds,
 And parts the flaunting cresses.

Oh, I have felt, in contrast great,
 This very present hour,
 Two truths as ne'er before I felt—
 Old Nature's twofold power—
 Her might, amid the ocean's roar—
 It thrilled me through and through—
 But thou hast taught me, little rill,
 She can be tender, too.

The compass of the waters' voice,
 Oh, surely now I hear—
 The tinkle of this tiny rill,
 So soothing and so clear,

Above the mighty note of ocean,
 Where its blended breakers roar,
 Hurling themselves in fury on
 The shingle of the shore.

Why haste thee onward, little rill,
 Unto the hungry sea ?
 To lose thyself within its depths—
 It has no need of *thee* !
 'Tis never full, it never lacks,
 Its might would still prevail,
 Tho' wide majestic rivers were
 All suddenly to fail.

Why haste thee onward, little rill,
 Unto that hungry sea ?
 'Twill quench thy voice that sings along
 So pleasantly to me !
 It waits to silence thee—and, ah,
 I know it needs must be,
 For there's a law for thee—and me—
 Of grim necessity.

All this and more, sweet little rill,
This day thou hast taught me ;
I wonder if aright and true,
I do interpret thee ?
More wouldst thou say, before we part,
Thou merry little elf ?—
It babbles on, and seems to say
“ I’m talking to myself ! ”

THE LARK AT HONISTER.

GRIM-VISAGED Honister ! that frowning face
 Bespeaks the curse of the human race—
 The god of gain :
 Naught from man's greed is e'er exempt :
 Naught can dissuade him from the attempt ;
 Nor aught restrain.

I, listening to those spectral hounds¹ that cry,
 In ceaseless chorus, o'er the mountains high,
 The livelong day—
 Was startled from a brooding reverie,
 Of direful sights and sounds, by thee,
 Lark, and thy lay !

¹ The carts, laden with slates, in descending the steep incline from the quarry's mouth at Yew Crag, their brakes being screwed down very tight, produce a succession of harsh, creaking sounds, all the way down. The echoes from these, over the heights of Honister and Green Gable, are curious and wonderful—to those who have heard a pack of foxhounds, in full cry, amid the mountains, the illusion is complete—before the cause is known.

Thou hast received, from many a poet's lays,
More than thy due of praise,

Or, so I thought :

But now, uplifted by those soaring wings,
My heart with admiration springs,
And joys unsought.

Up—up, with a springing bound !

Spurning the surly ground,

Cleaving the air—

To heaven—to heaven ;

By impulse driven :

That song seems everywhere !

A tiny speck, against the glittering sky,

Is all my dazzled vision can descry :

Upward and on—

Pursuing still thy spiral flight—

Mine eyes are aching at the sight :

Now thou art gone !

Yet, tho' unseen, thy ceaseless melody—
A chain of sound—doth fall on me ;
An overplus of song.

A SHEPHERD.

DICK is a shepherd, and that tells
The place of his abode—the fells :
Since birth presented him—a child
Pre-dedicated to the wild—
There to roam, with dog and stick,
Hath been the daily lot of Dick :
Never happy when away,
From his native haunts, a day.
Hardy as the flock of sheep,
'Tis his livelihood to keep :
Richly dowered with the wealth,
That mountains yield their children—health.
Nerve to dare, and steady head,
To gaze from off the precipice dread.
Sure of foot, in dangerous place,
Unswervingly a way to trace.
To whistle on his fingers taught,
Whereby his dog knows every thought.

A voice that travels from afar,
 Rousing the solitudes to war.
 His eye, of eagle-keenness, can
 The distant flock unerring scan—
 An ailing, or a wounded dam,
 A lonely, wildered, motherless lamb—
 Can see, with a glance, if all is well,
 And all their mazy numbers tell,
 As, on some lonely height he stands,
 To view afar their straggling bands.

There breathes, beneath that rugged form,
 Long battered with the mountain storm,
 A *man*—if you have heart to see
 Beyond your eyes—then such was he.
 Or, see your eyes but what they're bid?
 Then look elsewhere—such men are hid.

When o'er the fells the snows drive thick—
 But chiefly the early and late ones—Dick,

And such as he, are heroes then,
Tho' never enrolled by an eloquent pen.
Without a warning, the fiend descends,
Mountains and sky in darkness blends,
O'erwhelming, burying, the helpless sheep,
In the great gorges, drifted deep.

Oft sheep, themselves, can snow foresee,
And down the fell-sides headlong flee,
Filling the air with their plaintive cries,
A tumult that higher seems to rise—
Till, as a battle spent, it slowly dies—
Then silence, save a solitary bleat,
That only makes the silence more complete.
Sometimes, their wonted instinct fails—
Or, some good pasture found, prevails
Against its monitory voice,
Swaying them to a fateful choice—
Relentless falls the whirling doom,
Obscuring its approach in gloom,
While it drives o'er them their living tomb,

In the hollow of some o'erhanging rock,
Confounded and helpless, the huddling flock.

Gray morning dawns across the snow ;
But of the underlying woe,
Where life and death are gripped in fight,
Shows not a trace, but a pitiless white,
Unbroken, save where grim-faced rocks
Flung back the tempest's swirling shocks.
An all-pervading gray's in the air,
Beneath the gloom and above the glare.
The fells—above the jagged skirt
Of the restless, trailing mist—begirt
With darkness of the deepest night,
Their topmost ridges veil their might.
All sounds are stifled : silence dread—
As in the muffled abode of the dead :
Hushed is the torrent's continuous roar.
Flowing beneath its snow-piled floor.

Such a morn and place, as this,
Will show the man a shepherd is.

See him, before the crow of the cock,
 Stride forth to rescue the smothering flock !
 See him, and with him, his faithful serf,
 Wading together the eddying surf
 Of driving snow. Deem not the verse
 Unworthy, that would fain rehearse
 The doings of a shepherd's dog !
 Content through life at his heels to jog,
 Or watch his face, as he were a god—
 His only reward an occasional nod.
 Intelligent eyes, that speak and shine,
 Their master's very thoughts divine.
 At a word, springing up the precipitous side,
 Where his every step makes the loose stones slide.

You may watch those two, on opposite heights—
 (To recall them often the mind delights)
 Removed far—a great valley between,
 So far, the dog may scarce be seen—
 Responsive at once, to each whistle or shout,
 He promptly stops in his ranging about ;

Now, seated, he watches his far-off lord,
While he ponders what means each shouted word :
Then, understanding, starts again—
That he does understand he makes quite plain.
Performed his task, he stops the chase,
At the heels of his lord, resumes his place.

But sterner work than this awaits
This morning, for a hundred fates,
On man and dog, hang tremblingly—
To-day, with death, their fight must be.
Laboriously they scale the height—
A ghostly waste of endless white.
From side to side, or far ahead,
A devious course the dog hath led,
With many a deep-drawn sniff of his nose,
Ploughing the snow, as he upward goes ;
Oft looking back, to see if his pains,
The approval of his master gains ;
And, if encouraged, ranging higher—
A devotion no labour can ever tire.

'Tis a terrible work : the dog and man,
 For hours have toiled, since day began :
 Trying the likeliest places they know,
 Finding naught, but the pitiless snow—
 Where'er they trudge, 'tis everywhere,
 Chilling them with its horrible glare.

The cheerless day is wasting away—
 Already it's neither night nor day—
 When, out of the gloom, comes the muffled sound
 Of hurrying feet, and, peering round,
 Ah yes, at last ! a sight to cheer,
 And 'roll away their sickening fear :
 For, in the deepening gloom, they view,
 Of startled sheep, a straggling few—
 Gathering together, away they go !
 Their fleeces all dangling with frozen snow—
 Till, at safe distance, they can dare,
 Huddled together, to stand and stare :
 A grateful sight—they leave them there—
 For sheep won't move, while they can stare !—

To find where they started, by the clue
 Of the footprints—there the search renew ;
 For these have struggled with the foe,
 And escaped the clutches of the snow :
 Where they have stood, the chance is great,
 That others have met with a harder fate.

The tremulous dog—intense desire
 Kindling his instinct into fire—
 Commenced to circle round and round ;
 Nor ran, but with a springing bound,
 Ceaselessly round and round he went,
 Intoxicated by the scent :
 Nor could he, thus, himself confine,
 But voiced his feelings with many a whine.
 At length, he fixed upon a place,
 Where he halted in his mystic race—
 He smelt the snow, then burrowing deep,
 He scooped a hole wherein to creep,
 And, snuffing audibly, he tried
 To force the secret—satisfied

He seemed, and backward drew,
Fiercely pawed the snow, and threw
It vigorously far behind.
The shepherd knew that he could find
Some of the lost ones there, and made
An ample clearing with his spade ;
And soon, the lost ones, one by one,
Forth from their living graves they won :
In little dens, each one was saved—
By its warm breathing over-caved—
While some were found, on their release,
That had commenced to eat the fleece.

THE EARLY SPRING.

WHO loves not the awakening of woods,
The lengthening twilights, and the bursting
buds ?

To listen while the feathery choirs sing
The earliest triumphs of returning Spring ?

The purpling alders, bending o'er the stream,
When wavelets catch the reviving sunlight's gleam ?

When hedgerows, blushing with new life within,
At myriad points regarnishing begin ?

When first he sees, to reward his early quest,
Five open mouths within a thrush's nest ?

Or leaves the road, across the fields to ramble,
Where lambs, to stare at him, will cease to gambol?

Sets out at morn, with Spring's strong influence fired,
Returns at eve, with all his wanderings tired,

And having pried through valley, field, and wood,
Feels in his heart that God and everything is good?

AIRA FORCE, ULLSWATER.

OFT Nature doth her votaries abase
 In their own nothingness, before she deigns
 To show her choicest gifts—then sudden flings
 Her unveiled grandeur on the chastened soul.

The portal of yon verdure-clothed glen
 Entering, aweary with the glare and heat,
 How softly falls the dimpsy light
 Upon the jaded sense, and, heard from far,
 The thunder-rolling waters, where they take
 Their mighty leap!

Look down—a brooding gloom
 Enfolds each caverned depth, sublime and weird.
 The flanking rocks precipitous, above
 The whirling flood, do hide repellent forms,
 Beneath rich tapestries of woven moss,
 Refreshed by clouds of silvery spray. The great

Worn boulders, poised on high, a touch, almost,
 Would send them crashing to the depths below,
 Amid their fellows, where the writhing stream
 Twines in and out for ever. Sweetly grow
 The cooling ferns, decking each quiet nook,
 And e'en the moss-grown branches of the trees,
 Whose crabbed roots, below, grip the bare rocks,
 Like talons of gigantic birds of prey.

No holly bowers are seen ! You look for them,
 And find them not ; their burnished coats of
 mail,

Flashing the sunbeams from afar, e'en through
 The deepest shade, are absent there—'tis strange !
 Oh, Aira, can'st thou thus belie the tragic tale,
 Which through long centuries hath mingled with thy
 moan ?

It may not be !—they *were*, but are no more :
 They saw the wooing of Sir Eglamore,
 They saw the end—he cursed them, and they
 died !

'Tis meet a solemn twilight ever broods
 Above the steep and water-chiselled rocks,
 Relieved by sheets of pure white foam that float
 In each recess, or sometimes, in great heaps
 Pale yellow, twirling slowly round and round :
 Over the deep and darkling pool : and o'er
 The waters whirling in their rocky cell,
 Ere they do rush their narrow causeway through :
 And where the cold spray dashes on the cheek :
 And where the waters, pausing, backward draw,
 Before they take their awful plunge : and where
 The white stream falls upon its midway shelf,
 Whence, shattered into myriad specks, it falls,
 With hollow roar, down to the yawning gulf,
 Shaking the ground, and quivering in the air.

There lay the body of a wild red-deer—
 The latest victim of that mighty wrath—
 Flung down the Force, and in a moment killed :
 There cast aside, close by the swirling tide ;
 Upon a pile of driftwood it was laid,

As on a pyre—this very day were seen
Thy fellows, ranging o'er their craggy haunts,
But thou, poor lost one, laid so low, must tell,
Nor man nor beast can take that leap and live.

Then, suddenly, upon that place of awe,
There sweetly stole a soul-uplifting sight :
Through overarching trees, the noonday sun
Peeped down into the deep recess, and woke
A vision of surpassing loveliness—
A tiny rainbow stole across the gloom,
Spanning the dark abyss from side to side,
Till gleamed the whole as with unearthly light—
The smile of hope, methought, on black despair :
It lingers with me still.

THE HOME OF THE SEA-GULLS.

O^H restless ocean,
What mystic spell pervades
Thine every motion !
The long-drawn rumble
Of breaking waves :
Now angrily seething,
Frowning and hissing,
Round ramparts of rocks :
Now fawning and lapping
Each weed-covered stone
Fringed with thy foam.
Far away tumble
Thy white-crested billows;
Spangling and flashing—
Too bright for beholding.
Each fanning breeze laden
Fresh with thy saltness.
Raging in fury,

Where great frowning headlands
 Hurl backward thy might—
 The storm-shrouded coastline
 Tracked by thy whiteness.
 Wearing the sand dunes,
 Wearing away—
 Baring their red wounds
 To light of day.
 Waves forming, advancing—
 In rhythmical lines,
 Their sheeted foam leaving
 Troughed in between ;
 When the wind freshens
 Full to the gale,
 Rousing to frenzy
 The sea-gulls' wail.

Where they are wheeling round the cliffs :
 Where they couch at eve on the slippery rocks :
 Where waves are thundering far beneath :
 Where mighty rocks have fallen low—

Dread spoils of ocean piled : where others, poised,
 Are ready to fall, topped with precarious herbage :
 Where the head swims : where the startled eye looks
 down,
 And instant turns away :
 Where men are tempted to destruction :
 Where awesome caverns are outworn—
 Upheld by curious columns carved—
 By ocean in his play—all shapes
 Fantastic and uncouth : where waves
 Lashing around, in muffled rage,
 Dash upwards to the dreadful vault
 Of massive rocks primeval bared :
 Where falls the tide and leaves a hollow stillness,
 Broken by waters, dripping slow,
 As clock-ticks of eternity :
 Where rage the mighty powers
 Untamable by man—
 The battle-ground of earth and sea.
 High on the ledges of the o’erhanging cliffs,
 The sea-gulls build their inaccessible nests,
 And, sitting on their dusky eggs, they gleam

A multitude of white specks through the dusk :
Where, with the chorus of a thousand cries,
They circle round the beetling heights,
With the diapason of old ocean's roar,
Far down upon the rocks below.

Foraging, foraging
The barren deep :
Skimming and dipping :
Or couched on the wave :
Or wildly at play
Chasing each other :
With widespreading wings,
Now poised on the wind :
Now carried right upward,
On motionless wing :
Now rising : now falling :
Now letting them go,
Before the blast driven :
Now seizing stray morsels
From the crest of the wave ;

With a sudden swoop plunging—
Now upward and on,
To forage and sweep
O'er the barren deep.

The sun is sinking, sinking,
Beneath the crimson wave ;
A dazzling line, across the waste,
Marks a pathway to his grave,
Beneath a canopy of clouds—
Blazing with light unspeakable—
Which eye of cherubim
Might dare to gaze upon.
The sea-gulls flash the radiance
From off their shimmering wings :
And every cloud that flecks the vault of
 heaven
Hath caught the glory.

Blind with intolerable light,
The eye must turn away.

Far to the eastward, where
Hill beyond hill, in dim perspective, lies—
The clouds send back the glory.

The sea-gulls issue forth in flocks,
To revel in the splendour ;
Scarcely they seem to move the wing,
But float in air impalpable ;
And, round and round,
They circle higher, higher—
A white revolving pillar,
Based low upon the sea ;
As when the rooks, in autumn, start
Aerial evolutions.

The glory fades, which tongue of man,
Can never, never tell.
The shades of night are stealing round :
The sea-gulls are at rest :—
The only sound that breaks the calm,

A lapwing's solitary cry ;
And, through the gray, that falls upon
Earth, ocean, air, and sky,—
Throned on the headland high above—
The Lighthouse commences to blink.

A ROOKERY AND A MEMORY.

*C*AW, *caw—go back—go back—gaw!*

So said the rooks, or seemed, to me
Intruding on their privacy,
In this bleak spot, where the March winds blow.

Here let me, seated on this fallen tree—
Whence I may see
Them build their nests so zealously—
Within this old familiar scene,
Recall the long past that hath been ;
How readily it comes ! for childhood's hours,
Be ever decked with memory's fairest flowers.

How do the rooks cling to the old, old place !
This home, so silent now ;
These eyeless windows, and

This falling roof ;

These doorless rooms, where the weeds grow rank,
Upon each wall, cheerless and blank—

'Tis almost cheerful, now, the rooks do chase
Each other, round the beech-tree tops !

Or, on the upmost twigs, they poise,
With clamorous noise :

Here planted to protect the place,

From all the winds that blow,

And hiss and howl, and toss them to and fro.

How silent it must be, when, nesting done,

The rooks take themselves away, and their young !

Yet here do they come—

Their foraging done—

At the close of each winter day,

Ere to the woods, for rest, they fly away :

Here sit to watch the sun go down,

Beyond the hills, with an angry frown.

Here, faithful still, they come to build .

(When the reviving sun doth gild

The leafless trees)

Their eyries, rocking in the breeze.

How gaunt the beeches stand !
Their fluted pillars shine on every hand,
Solemn and silently—
A temple for the wind.
Here, on their smooth barks hewn,
The well-remembered names I find,
Which, carved in youthful hours,
Have still defied the powers
Of time, decay, and ruin.

THE MONARCH OF THE WOOD.

UPON the outskirts of a great lone wood—
 Where night-fears brood in sombre silence
 dread—

It ruled the soil.

The cattle loved its shade ;

There stood, in summer drouth, and swished their
 tails,
 Or laid them down, in drowsy somnolence,
 Where played its dancing shadows on the sward.
 But if, at sweltering noon, some mad impulse
 Possessed them, and disturbed their wonted calm,
 Till, frenzied by the heat and torturing flies,
 They tore around the field, with tails erect—
 The sun-baked turf resounding to their hoofs—
 Arrested in their mad career at length,
 With one consent, again they sought its shade.

The trunk, a massive pillar, low and strong,
 Wide-based, with swelling bastions round : its waist
 Curved hollow, bulging out above, where spread
 Its mighty arms—themselves the size of trees—
 Extending far, with many a winding twist,
 By nature framed, to foil the assaulting blast.

The autumn pageant faded from the wood :
 Decaying leaves gave forth their sickly smell—
 Sickly but sweet—too sweet for wholesomeness.
 'Twas then the oak tree fell, still clothed in all
 Its leafy panoply of rusty red—
 Fell headlong, where it had o'ershadowed long
 Its ample circuit, with a monarch's sway.

Ye, who make oft, with things inanimate,
 Your harmless friendships ; or who look for types
 Ideal, of what nature strives to be ;
 And, finding them, compare all else with these—
 Who have your secret bowers of delight,

Discovered from the mass, by heedful search,
Or sprung in glad surprise upon the eye—
Oft visit them, and find refreshment there :
There loved ones haunt those silent bowers still :
There memories, sweet or sad, unbidden rise :
There voices from the silent past are heard :
There sorrowing hearts put feeler-tendrils forth
To grasp a firm support : there turn again
Closed pages of life's book : there call to mind
Scenes cumbered 'neath the tangled growth of
 years :—
Such was that oak.

SPRINGTIME IN THE WOODS.

THOU glorious Spring,
 That dost release the frozen founts of life,
 Making Creation's myriad pulses throb—
 Hail to thy coming, glorious Spring!

Ah! see the white wounds, made by the wintry
 winds,
 Are yawning everywhere,
 All jagged, splintered, torn—
 See, where the fallen giants lie,
 Along the outskirts of the wood;
 Which bore the brunt of every blast,
 Protecting those behind.

This day, a marvel in the woods, I saw—
 A tree had fallen, and the next within,
 Unable to withstand the unwonted blast,

When its protector fell, had fallen too ;
A third, a fourth, and on, and on—
I did not tell their number, but,
Above the line of fallen victims, I could see
A yawning gap—right to the forest's heart.

Now are they seen,
Those marvels of green—
The festoons of the firs,
Swaying in every breeze that stirs !
How bright they stand against the pines,
When the April sun recovering shines,
Faint smiling through his tears,
And shrivelled winter disappears !
And the birches wave their tresses fair,
Like to some wood-nymph's wind-swept hair.

Away—away,
To the woods, in May !
Over the ridge,
Across the old plank-bridge—

Where the babbling water hushes,
Gliding through the reeds and rushes.

No cry of hounds,
Through the wood resounds ;
Nor crack of sportsmen's guns—
Save where their myrmidons
Wage war against all life
That precious pheasants may survive,
Until they choose to murder them.

All through the evening air—
Spring odours everywhere—
Through the old lichen-covered gate
There you shall enter in, and straight,
Behold the blue mist of the hyacinths !
Far as the eye can follow,
All down the slope, and filling all the hollow :
Oh, 'tis a sight that whoso' sees,
Treasures in lifelong memories—

When first that sight is flung upon the eye,
 'Tis a supreme moment that shall never die !

Stars of the wood, in countless myriads, shine
 The anemones in the twilight of their leafy shrine.

There is a temple in the wood—
 Raised on its giant pillars high,
 Of mighty beech trees ! it doth stand—
 Right in the centre of the wood.
 And there is rolled a stone—
 To mark whence it can best be seen—
 There may you sit,
 As the dancing shadows flit,
 Nor ever tire
 To mark what seem like aisles and choir :
 The delicate beauties of the tracery high—
 Against the blue of the shimmering sky—
 Of tenderest leaves that do reveal
 Fresh beauties every day :

The glorious light that gems them, too,
There mildly filters through ;
There, gentle zephyrs play with the leaves,
Rejoicing in their newborn life :
The evening sun doth linger there,
And, slanting, falls athwart the trees—
The great trunks dappled o'er with golden light.
There lies a still pool in the midst,
That ne'er is ruffled by the breeze.
And round and round the gamboling rabbits play,
While the birds prolong their evening chorus sweet.
No other sound there is—save the woodpecker,
A-tapping of the trees.

AUTUMN.

AUTUMN is weeping in the woods—the hedgerows
they

A maze of tangled beauty in decay.

The peasants gather in—their toil it never stops—

The dripping remnants of their scanty crops.

A veiling mist on all is overcast :

With pallid water-gray the sun is glassed—

But suddenly shines through!—the cold gray mist,

By the magic of those welcome sunbeams kissed,

Reduced to myriad dewdrops, flashing bright,

Like glittering gems, on the entranced sight.

Now, beauteous autumn day, with gladness thronged,

Now thou art like a summer eve prolonged !

Trees in the forest stand a multitude

Of fairy fountains, in the distance viewed,

Spraying such various-coloured shades, that e'en
Imagination pales before them—queen
Of the autumn reigns the wood ! how grand,
Within, is decked her glorious temple—stand,
And on you there shall fall such gentle light,
As, welcome on a weary pilgrim's sight,
Falls through the painted window of a shrine !
From branch to branch myriad gossamers fine,
Like tethered sunbeams, caught in middle air,
All waving, flashing, twinkling everywhere.

Far as the eye can reach, all seamed with ghylls,
The stately panorama of the hills.
In autumn seen, their shadows deeper are,
Their sunlit patches brighter, sweeter far—
To gaze on them the eye cannot but choose,
Attracted by their ever-changing hues ;
While great cloud-shadows slowly trail along
Their riven sides, the sunlit spots among :
Till falls at eve the glorious orb of day,
Still, o'er those hills, he bends his parting ray.

Then may you feel the solace evening brings :
Then may you feel the poetry of things,
When, overhead, clouds spread their golden floods,
And ring-doves seek their sanctuary-woods !

A SWAN.

RESPLENDENT creature ! proudly round and round
 The garden-lake, this hour, thou hast convoyed
 Thy beauteous partner ; conscious, so 'twould seem,
 Of the admiring eyes that follow thee—
 A floating vision of unsullied white ;
 Stealing a look of fondness, now at her,
 Now at thine own fair image in the lake.
 Is't pride that makes thee hold thy head so high ?
 Or the better, thus, to see and to admire—
 Reflected on the bosom of the lake—
 Thy noble self ? proudly self-conscious bird !
 Why spreadst thy wings so oft ?—that all may see
 How thou canst fold them up so gracefully !
 Low condescending, elegantly, now,
 To sip the water ; or, it *might* have been,
 To kiss that gorgeous image therein seen !
 A hundred studied ways that neck can pose :
 Oh, he's a beautiful creature, *that* he knows.

Disdainfully ignoring all the low
Plebeian throng, of splashing water-fowl—
Wild ducks, bald-headed coots, and all the rest,
That do presume, or dare, to trespass there—
Majestically slow, he glides along ;
Stopping to readjust it, when he sees
A feather ruffled by the gentle breeze !

EVENING.

THE sun hath ceased to glare the eye :
A star faint glimmers in the sky :
And over hollow, hill, and tree,
Expands the eve's tranquillity.

Gently die the sounds of day—
Tramp of horse-hoofs, far away :
While the bird of dusky wing
Makes the pensive echoes ring.

Bleat of sheep from mist-veiled fields :
Bark of watch-dog—distance yields :
Nearer sounds the swollen stream,
All its voices blended seem.

It fades—it fades, this hour of rest—
Quenched be the glories of the west.
Yet thanks to thee, sweet hour of eve,
A daily sabbath thou dost give !

TWO VOICES IN THE NIGHT.

DARK fell the night: the towering mountains
 round,
 And the black clouds that lowering o'er them
 trail,
 Darkened the darkness of the lonely vale
 Filled by one awful, all-pervading sound—
 A multitude of torrents, great and small,
 Hurl'd by the mountains down their riven
 sides,
 Incessant in foam-agitating tides—
 Uniting their hoarse voices, there did fall,
 Upon the stunned ear, such a thund'rous roll,
 As filled the vale, the air, the sky, the soul—
 Till over all, in sable folds, the pall
 Of gloom was cast.

But, List! two voices sweet—
 Over the raging tumult they are borne—

The afflicted ear soothing and soft to greet :

As a cloud, from off the mountain-top, at morn,
The burthen from the soul

Doth gently roll :

Out of the blackness of the shelving heights they
come :—

The plaintive bleating of a stray lamb's cry,

The tender ruckle of the dam's reply !

THE MOONRISE.

A BLUSH dawns in the east,
 Before the glowing in the west hath ceased ;
 And radiantly it grows—a beacon-light,
 To herald forth the empress of the night—
 Behold her ! calm, majestic, full, and slow :
 What queenly graces from her rising flow !
 Stately she mounts, on the attendant clouds,
 And takes her throne, after the misty shrouds
 Of earth are left : the stars their faces veil ;
 The brightness of their quivering lights must fail—
 Alone she reigns—queen of a magic sea,
 Where all is bright, but naught so bright as she :
 Moved she, or seemed ? 'twas clouds that past her
 flew—
 Again she stands amid the changeless blue !

HOAR-FROST.

BEHOLD the dawn !

The hoar-frost's filmy shroud o'erspreads the
lawn.

The crystal artist, with consummate skill,
Wrought silently, all night, his wondrous will :
The silvern dust besprinkled with his breath,
Which makes a fairy scene of nature's death :
The forest, decked with countless feathery plumes,
A mazy palace of delight, assumes ;
Where myriad gems flash forth at every stride—
But, when the next is taken, these have died—
While every step calls forth its fresh supplies,
With all the latent fire that in them lies.
The dazzling whiteness of the mountain snow,
That blushes roseate in the sunset glow.
The undulating softness of the hills,
Against the dawning sky : the muffled rills,
Silent beneath their icy veils, or heard

As from afar—but, ah, no mortal word
May tell the beauty, when the slow mists rise,
Of radiant smiles, beneath soft azure skies !
Old Winter's features never look so fair,
As when the chastened sunshine lingers there—
A timid glance—a convalescent's smile !
Languid and faint—but full of hope the while.

The glorious biting of the frosty air,
For those who to the woods, on such a morn,
 repair !
It stings the cheeks into a ruddy glow ;
It fans to life the laggard spirits low.
Hilarious, buoyant, gloriously free—
Who could not shout aloud with boyish glee ?

SPECTRES ON THE MOOR.

(The account of the spectre horsemen of Souter Fell is a familiar one in this neighbourhood and need not be given here.)

A CROSS a lone wide moor, at set of day,
A band of spectral horsemen wind their
way :

Slowly they move against the glowing sky,
Along the crest of western hills that lie
Where ends the moor—a moving silhouette
Of sharply outlined forms, where dark hills met
The orange sky ; when all things earthly wear
A subdued reflex of the heavenly glare.
All plainly seen, so wonderfully lit—
The tossing horse heads, chafing at the bit :
The rhythmic movement of their countless limbs :
The swaying forms of riders, too : forth skims
The spectral host, and oh, how silently !

Nightfall is ever silent, but to see
It close around a widespread moor, where man
Is barely in possession, where the eye may scan
No handiwork of his.

GRIEF.

WHEN darkened lives enter grief's shadowy
gloom—

Without one ray of light their way to illume—
Dense, as when storm-pent clouds frown overhead,
When all earth's joyous face lies coverèd
In dismal gloom : tho' each familiar sight
Remains, its very soul hath fled—delight
Is dead—all things do mourn—scarce we believe
They are the same, that could such gladness give,
Which, erst, we knew—'tis thus the grieving soul,
Feels o'er her world, within, a desolation roll,
And starts at her own consciousness—dismayed
By sight of things familiar, strange arrayed :
A part of someone else's life, avers,
Hath got detached, and drifted into hers !

THE OLD LANE.

FAR from the dusty road : the beaten track
 Of horses going to the fields and back,
 Runs down the centre : all the rest is green—
 Save that a wheel-rut, on each hand, is seen—
 Here can be viewed Spring's new procession gay,
 Amid the silence of the closing day.
 No one intrudes upon the quiet spot,
 Save the worn toiler homeward to his cot.

Who loves not to explore a lane between
 Old stumps of thorn regarnished with fresh green,
 And full of holes, whence cool ferns pendent grow,
 Primroses peeping from the roots below ?

The baby faces of the sportive lambs
 Peep through the hedge, close by their browsing dams :

See ! now they're off to stretch their buskined
legs—

Awkwardly big, and seeming stiff as pegs—
In a collective scamper round and round ;
Soon to return at some unwonted sound.

The blackbird's warning skirl, behind the hedge :
The piping of a curlew in the sedge :
A choir of larks, chanting above—and then,
List to the shrill notes of the tiny wren !
So small is he, that scarcely you can see him—
Was ever such a voice, from such a tiny being !

The lapwing, now—by family cares oppressed—
Feels nervous for the safety of his nest ;
Tew—whew—wit : whit !—whit !
As restless, to and fro, they tumbling flit,
On their winnowing wings—as tho' not right
They were put on—or work a little tight !

The dusky veil glides gently o'er the scene ;
Still may we feast on pleasures that have been.
Voices of village children still at play,
The fittest closing for a rural day.

THE LITTLE SPEEDWELL.

O F all the flowers that commence to grow,
 When the mild radiance of the primrose
 dies,

None be so sweet unto the traveller's eyes—
 Spangling in rank profusion the hedgerow—
 As thee, Speedwell—well worthy of thy name!
 Blest be that sunny smile of heaven's blue!

Blest be that little eye of beaming light!

Aye welcome to the weary wanderer's sight,
 Encouraged thus his journey to pursue.

Struggling for notice mid the tangled throng,
 Ever towards him turns thy tiny face.

He, musing as he passes, loves to trace
 Looks that to thee, and a little maid, belong,
 Whose face wistfully mid the crowd upturned—

Too modest with the assertive throng to cope
For notice—yet betraying inward hope
That noticed she will be, and singled out !
Who would not do it just to see a pout
Change to an angel's smile ?

THE EVENING STAR.

WHEN the hot day is spent, how sweet it is—
 In the calm twilight of a summer eve—

To watch thee, Hesperus, where thou dost live,
 Companion of the wistful silences !

Without a rival in the sunset skies—

(Save when the early moon is showing dim,
 The pale thin glory of her crescent's rim)

Thy brightness growing as the daylight dies :

What thoughts of pensive sweetness from thee
 flow,

Hovering upon the verge of yon Shekinah-
 glow !

A RILL.

FORTH babbling came a tiny rill,
Frolicking merrily down the hill:
So small a thing—how it could prate,
With noise quite disproportionate !

Gaily its nimble waters danced,
While in them myriad sunbeams glanced :
Methought were seen, in that delight,
Glad eyes of children, laughing bright.

But where its quiet waters stay—
Like children tired out with play—
Bubbles, ripples, specks of foam,
O'er its surface idly roam.

“ Idly ? ” No !—their image traced,
In gold outline, the bottom graced :
The dreary sand, a sparkling ground,
Whereon bright fairy-forms danced round.

’Twas gone ! the sun, behind a cloud,
Threw o’er the whole a fleeting shroud ;
The rill was there—but ’twas alone—
Its fairy replica was gone.

A SUMMER NOON.

A SABBATH stillness o'er the village broods,
And July silence reigns within the woods,
In sultry solitudes.

The sweltering cattle seek the hillocks high.
The exhausted brooks amid their pebbles die ;
Beneath a brazen sky.

Outside the window, in the lazy noon,
The swarming insects float in mazy swoon,
Droning their endless tune :

In garish sunlight dance their time away,
Regardless of their passing shortlived day—
As wandering sunbeams they.

A butterfly, jaunting across the fence,
Tries a few flowers, and then flickers hence,
In slow magnificence.

A breath of air steals through the torturing ray,
Its benediction on the brow to lay,
Just felt—and then away.

The under-grayness of a single leaf
It failed to lift; fair visit—all too brief—
But, ah, the sweet relief!

Sped it away on fairy footsteps fleet?
Died it of the effort?—or resistance meet?
Or stifled by the heat?

THE ORGAN'S PRAISE.

A GREAT bell rung,
 In solemn cadence, o'er the crowded street
 Echoing the footfalls of a thousand feet—
 Its tones, in quick succession, fell—each beat
 Seemed unto me a question to repeat,

Reiterated oft—those questions flung
 To me, were not unanswered, for I found
 Myself beneath a mighty roof.

The bell had ceased, but the persistent sound
 Long seemed to linger in the air around.

A church amid the crowd, and yet aloof
 In contrast great—noises that stunned the ear,
 Without, grew still, or sounded but remotely near.

A mighty organ then commenced to play—

Mighty in sooth, but oh, so tender, too!
 It won my heart—it bore me far away.

Now, throned upon a judgment seat, defiant,
 Thundering in awful tones, a mighty giant—
 Now, pleading in a far-off tone, it drew
 The tears to mine eyes—so sadly now,
 Methought I heard a thousand angels weep.
 The answering thunders of the mighty deep :
 And the praises of the multitudes that bow
 Before the Eternal Throne, while, in that seat,
 I felt those awful notes quivering beneath my feet.

And then, in the great psalm of the Creation—
 How all things, both in heaven and earth, do
 raise
 Their every voice, in their Creator's praise—
 Oh may I ne'er forget, now I have heard
 That mighty organ's crashing punctuation,
 That "wind and storm fulfil His Word"!

NUNNERY WALKS.

LIST ! how the tumult of the water blends
 With the sougling of the wind among the
 trees :

Prevail the waters—and then die away,
 As a baffled wind dies on a winter night.
 Within this temple rude, by nature made,
 Swells the chorus of the waters and the storm ;
 Where roar on roar, of hollow deepness, falls
 Reverberate beneath the shelving rocks :
 The very leaves dumfounded at the sound.
 Gaze down into the giddy whirl below !
 (Sheer as the spruces, perpendicular
 As plummet lines, let down to sound the deep)
 And see the waters instantaneous change
 From dappled dark to milk-white foam—behold
 Them stunned arise, to stumble round and round
 Their dungeon walls, to find the narrow pass.
 See a procession slow of bubbles show

Where the darkling waters rest—anon they steal
 Forth from their rocky caverns, thence to take
 Their final plunge, the sun-hued spray arising ;
 Where struggling trees compete for life and light :
 Where dead ones fall into the arms of living :
 Where nature dies a natural death, and where
 Man grovels not for gain.

Spite of all change,

This roar goes on for evermore the same :
 And o'er the grave of buried centuries,
 The musing eye may see, calm mid the roar,
 The veiled Benedictines walk at eve.
 A fitter place they sure could not have chosen,
 To train their gentle souls the way of Heaven,
 Than here, where Croglin takes three onward leaps,
 To gently lose itself within its peaceful Eden !

THE YEW TREE AND THE TOMB.

THE guardian hills stand all around :
 A little world shut in to silence deep—
 But for the waters' never-ending sound,
 And bleat of mountain sheep.

Forsaken Fane ! no stately grace
 Is thine, to tempt the spellbound heart to praise ;
 What need is there,—in such a place ?
 Thy very silence prays.

The Churchyard, like a sheepfold square ;
 From wall to wall the wind-swept herbage waves :
 A yew, a tomb, a headstone here and there,
 And many nameless graves.

A solitary yew—dark tree,
Was it the love of thee—or dread,
Prompted man's choice to fall on thee,
To guard the holy dead ?

Unlovely tree, did he regard
Thine untold age—which, somehow, seems to be
Life out of death—that, in the old Churchyard,
He ever planted thee ?

Or chose the unloveliest of all trees,
Silent abhorrence to express of death ?
Or that thy tossing arms, creaking i' th' breeze,
Might scare the midnight wraith ?

The sexton, in a sombre cleft,
Within thy disembowelled trunk, hath laid—
To rust and wait their next employment left—
His pickaxe and his spade.

To honour Spring, a lighter green

Thy great arms deigns to tip : no sign of bloom,
Or verdure, 'neath thy baneful shade is seen,
Save moss upon the tomb.

The moss scooped forth, the letters show—

Inscribed beneath his age and name—
Hid by thy gloom, a poet sleeps below,
Tho' never known to fame.

One who had lived in foreign climes :

Hither, at length, he bent his weary way,
To meditate on things and men and times,
To end his mortal day.

One consecrate to solitude ;

Who in the Muses, may be, found relief—
(With such expulsive power they be endued)
In trouble, pain, or grief.

Farewell, thou lowly Fane :

Farewell, thou old Churchyard :

And thee, dark tree, long may thou guard

The ashes of thy bard !

A TALE OF ROSSET GHYLL.

A man of Langdale told me that, when he was a child, he knew a place, near the head of Rosset Ghyll, where tradition said—generations before—a woman had been buried.

Overtaken by a storm, in crossing over from Wastdale into Langdale, she lost her way, died of exposure, and was buried when and where she was found. Reputed to have been a vendor of small-wares, pins, needles, *thimbles*, etc. (the reason for the italic word will be seen later), it was believed that the basket, in which she carried about her goods, with all its contents, had been buried with her. He still remembers the believers and the disbelievers in the old tradition discussing its merits, until, to settle the question, some men dug up the soil around the traditional spot, and found some stones built into the shape of a coffin, wherein the soil was light and crumbling; and though they could see no trace of human remains, yet found some of the articles she had carried about for sale.

(These wanderers must have been held in considerable esteem in the old days, not so much, perhaps, from what they sold, as that they were news-carriers, itinerating round from dale to dale in turn, acquainting the inhabitants with all that was passing in the other dales.)

Upon the above details (no more could be gathered), the following poem, such as it is—not much, I fear—is founded.

WHERE e'en the solitary must cry out
 For converse, startled by the unreal sound
 Of his own voice;—where the shepherd's far-heard shout

Alone e'er wakes the silences profound—
A pedlar she.

From Wastdale she, one morning, took her way,
For Langdale bound—it was a winter day.
With all the force that she was able,
She clomb the rugged Pass of Sty,
Where Lingmell Beck goes thundering by,
Aslant the reaches of the Gable.
But the way was long and steep, and she
Trode with her burden wearily—
Wearily, wearily, over the stones,
And the cold it pierced her very bones.
Ere she, at length, had reached Sty-Head,
And passed its tarn, of silence dread—
A gathering storm made twilight of the noon,
The mountain-tops shrouded in awesome gloom :
The crags, beside the path, uncertain loom.
Nightfall would bring no friendly light of moon.

Sudden, the wind burst forth its fury pent,
Across the rugged Pike of Scawfell,

With a shriek of wildering madness awful ;
 As all the furies dread of the Atlantic,
 In an onslaught frantic,
 The mountain rent.

A sudden lull—the ominous flakes begin to fall ;
 Silent and singly—ghostly—still—
 Upon her cheek dissolving chill,
 Each with a gentle hiss—
 Its traitorous kiss—
 The heralds of great flakes that soon must cover all.

Down fell the flakes, amain,
 High twirling round and round,
 Or, slanting, driven upon the ground—
 Every motion of the wind
 Made visible—before, behind,
 The snow was quickly lain ;
 Naught to be seen, but the mountain path ;
 The only hope she hath ;

She clung to it—as they to hope,
Who oft, in other darkness, grope.

Why had she come, on such a day ?
She ? had ever she been known to fail,
Or turn back from the toilsome way,
For darkness, tempest, snow or hail ?
Had she not new wares in her pack,
Which made her dare to face the wrack ?
Had she not news—great news, to tell ?
That *must* be told, tho' storms may do their worst—
Untold, her woman's heart had well-nigh burst—
Was't not her day for Langdale ? o'er the fell,
Come fair or foul, she must betake her way,
And then, by the cottage firelight glow,
She'd soon forget the wildering snow,
With all the trials of the day.

Over Esk Hause's brow,
Her course is downward leading now,
But the way is difficult and slow,
The treacherous stones lie covered with snow.

Here is the heart of solitude,
When seen beneath a summer sky :
But, ah ! when the storm-fiends are at war,
And the powers of darkness brood,
And the seething torrents roar
From the unseen mountains high !

To mark her way,
No guiding stone-heaps lay.
Set is the shrouded sun :
The winter day is done.

But, looming from the darkness, now,
A boulder she hath reached ;
Torn from the mountain's brow,
Smoothed by the ages, and by tempests bleached ;
A thankful warmth within her grew,
For here was *something* that she knew !

She eased her from her burden, there—
Long and wearily it pressed—

Ere she descended by the steepy stair,
That winds a way down Rosset Ghyll;
Where the waters never, never rest—
E'en now the tumult doth her hearing fill,
Of the torrent hoarse,
Over great boulders in its course.

Rested at length, she started again,
To find the path down the headlong glen.
She wandered long—but alas! she found,
Fainter and fainter, came the torrent's sound.
Mistaking a path the sheep had made—
Diverging far from the human track—
Her weary feet hath strayed;
And they must trace the weary distance back.

Awhile she followed those erring footprints, slow—
Obliterated soon by the driving snow—
Then she was lost!
Lost—and in such a place!

But with blind chance, at most,
 To aid her hopeless case.
 For hours she wandered aimlessly,
 Through weary wastes of snow—
 Now round and round, now to and fro—
 Oh ! whither, whither, could she go,
 The impending doom to flee ?

Sudden, within some water, still and black,
 Her feet were plunged—it was a tarn :
 And a glimmering ray came trembling back,
 Of the hope that she thought had flown.
 Following the stream, by the emptying waters
 worn,
 She stood once more by the well-known boulder-
 stone.

Then, like the imprisoned bird, whose fluttering
 rage
 Beats helpless against the bars of its cage,

And every means of escaping tries—
 Till, sickened by the fruitless effort, dies :
 So she, again, again—
 To find the path she tried—'twas all in vain.
 For, as the hunted stag, weary and spent,
 Crawls homeward to some covert-haunt,
 To die in that familiar sight,
 And make its dying light :
 So she, returning to the stone—
 Glad to have *something* that was known—
 Where a small space of unshown ground,
 On the sheltered side of the stone, was found—
 There sank she down,
 To rest—to rest,
 By the snow caressed,
 Till a sweet oblivion stole o'er every sense—
 Nature's blest antidote for woes intense.

The unregarded snow came swirling down—
 Rest, rest she craved, delicious, welcome rest—
 The storms may rave, the snows may fall :
 Sweetly oblivious she of them all.

But around the stone, on either side,
 The snow blew soft, in a powdery tide :
 Meeting in front, they built a drifted wall—
 More, over the top of the stone, did gently fall—
 Till higher and higher rose that prison wall ;
 The wind the builder, with the small,
 Incessant, rustling, gentle snow—
 Spreading perfidious, sure and slow,
 The enclosing doom—
 Her living tomb.

Long, long, it snowed.
 But when, at last, faint sunshine glowed,
 Not a trace of that boulder was seen,
 Save a gently rising mound—
 Smooth, soft and round—
 And all the white mountains showed,
 With their valleys, boulder-strewn,
 As tho' in marble they were hewn.

.

The Pass was snow-blocked long.
But relenting slow, at length,
The south wind blew with a genial strength,
Over the snow-bound mountains flew,
And from his wings a softening moisture threw.

Then silent gorges all like thunder rung—
Then Rosset Ghyll awoke tumultuous :
Released from the grip of the icy king,
The seething snow-broth waters rush,
Their whelming might against the boulders fling,
Making them grate and groan,
And scrape and moan.

The mountains—not uncovered quite,
Tho' streaked their sides with black and white—
Tempted a wayfarer forth again,
To climb the steep of Rosset Glen.
He, with a pack-horse, took his way,
From Langdale, at the break of day ;

Spades, rakes and shears, selling he,
And the like things of husbandry.

The long-lost pedlar (so report—
Tho' her journeys never were known to fail—
Was doubtless wintering in some dale,
Safe from all storms in a snug resort).

Reaching the top, they breathless stand :
He, backward turning, views the far-spread land,
That lay beneath the morning haze ;
Resting himself and horse, long doth he gaze.

Turning, at length, to view the destined way—
Where, on and up, the winding passage lay—
What!—what is that?—by yonder stone?
A female form!—reclining, and alone!

[The snow, abating, showed her still in death,
As lifelike, as when first it stole her breath :

And, slow dissolving off the ground,
 Still left a circling drift around,
 Wherein she sat ;
 Her pannier round her shoulder strapped—
 As nothing untoward had happed—
 Nor disarranged her hat.]

Pressing forward he—
 Can it—can it be
 The long-lost pedlar ? *It is she !*
 A hail good morn, aloud, he cried—
 Adding a mirthful jest, beside—
 No answering word she spoke :
 No recognising look :
 Dread silence fell—
 Save that the echoes deep his own words slowly
 tell.

No words he said—
 He stands in the holy presence of the dead.

And that reposeful look was there,
 The dead are wont to wear,
 A smile, almost !
 As tho' the last look which they took—
 Those eyes that are closed—
 Ere the spirit the clay forsook—
 Smiled at an unseen something, near,
 And left the lingering shadow here.

Should he bear her thence to hallowed ground,
 To lie beneath a soft green mound ?
 What was the best ?
 Oft he had heard it said,
 That the spirits of the unburied dead
 Never do rest—

The horse vain sniffed the barren glade :
 His eye fell on an unsoiled spade,
 That dangled at her side—
 'Gainst other wares, it tinkled like a bell—
 Here she had died—

Child of the mountains, she :
 Here let her buried be,
 Here where she fell ;
 Here in her native soil—
 His be the office—his the toil !

He buried her there,
 With tender care—
 And the pannier she bore,
 When her journeys she plied,
 With all of its store—
 He placed at her side.

.

All travellers whom chance
 Did ever lead that way,
 Looked with a reverent glance,
 Where the pedlar's ashes lay.

The little child, in passing by,
Tugged at its mother's dress,
And, from her further side, peeped shy,
As on they quicker press.
Generations passed—
But the tale was handed on,
By father unto son,
And, like the hills, stood fast.

Till the age arose
That everything knows :
By its decrees,
None may believe,
Nor aught receive,
Save that he sees.

Two quarrymen, to test the tale,
Went forth, with spades, from Langdale Vale.
They dug away the soil,
In their impious toil ;

They dug full deep,
 To force the secret of the ancient heap.
 For long they found naught,
 Of that which they sought—
 Naught checked their boisterous mirth,
 As they shovelled away the earth ;
 Till the spades gave a grating sound !
 On some stones that, in order, were built around—
 Forming a rude sarcophagus—
 Which, by reverent hands, must have been
 made,
 And *someone's* body therein laid,
 Or else, said they, " how came it thus ? "
 From it the crumbling soil they remove :
 But naught did they find of human remains,
 Rewarding their (now chastened) pains,
 Or the old, old tale to prove.
 To dig the more, thought they, was nothing
 worth—
 And one threw up a final spade of earth—
 Hark ! something jingles !
 Whence came the sound ?

They search all round
The upturned ground :
At last they found
A few old rusty thimbles !

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